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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Secretary
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DEFENSE INFORMATION FOR
USDA EMPLOYEES

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEFS OF BUREAUS AND OFFICES
Defense and Agriculture Series -- No. 1
Subject: Agriculture's Part in Total Defense

Farm people and workers in government agricultural agencies are anxious to help the national defense program in every effective way.

The gravity of the situation which our nation is facing is evidenced by the sweeping program which the representatives of the people in Congress have authorized to provide security against all threats of aggression.

We in the United States still have time to profit from the experience of the peace-loving nations of Europe which have now been overrun by the dictators.

Nations which tried appeasement found they had only succeeded in convincing the enemy of their weakness. Nations which depended on neutrality alone for safety now are quartering armies of occupation. Nations which permitted disunion are having their internal quarrels settled by the conqueror. Only those who put their trust in preparedness and in unity have remained free--and their freedom remains in deadly peril.

The marshaling of our resources to meet this threat means more than the forging of cannon, the building of ships and planes, and the arming of soldiers. It means the ordering of our affairs so that our people will hold fiercely to the belief that the American ideal is worth defending.

This American ideal means different things to different people and no one would have it otherwise. That is a thing we cherish about our way of life--we give the other fellow room to disagree--provided that disagreement does not imperil the safety of all. The American ideal holds sacred every man's right, within the limits of democracy and fairness, to speak, write, vote, and worship as he thinks best. The American ideal includes a decent opportunity to make a decent living.

Total defense means the maintenance of these fundamentals and an unceasing effort to work toward these ideals, for it is these, essentially, which we are planning to defend. This is the ancient faith which must be justified by works if we are to remain secure and at peace.

Therefore, we must take whatever steps are necessary to give every American a part in the national life--to make him realize that his skill and labor and his presence in the community are wanted and needed.

In this emergency, it is vital that every industry and every phase of national life be included in a unified national effort.

A strong agriculture is essential to a strong nation.

Fortunately, even before the threat of aggression, much had been done through the cooperation of farmers and government to restore the strength of agriculture.

Agriculture is organized to produce ample quantities of food and fiber and also raw materials to supply any likely needs.

The increase in farm income, which has nearly doubled in the last few years, has enabled farmers to modernize and rehabilitate their producing plant.

Farmers are conserving and rebuilding the fertility of their soil.

Through the Ever Normal Granary program, reserves of food and fiber have been stored against a future day of need resulting from short crops or increased demand.

Groups of producers who have lost vital export markets because of the war are able to protect their industries against ruin by making use of the machinery for production adjustment.

Through the Food Stamp Plan and other programs for distribution of surplus farm products, agriculture is not only finding new outlets at home for these products but is contributing to the health and efficiency of the whole nation.

Rehabilitation of destitute farmers has been an important factor in restoring the strength of agriculture and in increasing its ability to contribute to national defense.

Hundreds of REA cooperatives already operating, with more organizing every month, are taking electric energy into the open country. Thus, the first essential for the operation of decentralized industry--a power supply--is being provided.

In addition to the efforts of farmers, agriculture is contributing to national defense through the work of research scientists of the Department of Agriculture, who are developing new sources of materials needed in the defense program.

These are important contributions to defense. A prime duty of farm people and Department of Agriculture workers is to continue and strengthen these efforts. All of us must develop understanding and readiness to adapt the programs to changing world conditions and the developing needs of national defense.

Additionally, it is our duty to study and understand the situation which makes the defense program necessary, to know what total defense involves, and to keep acquainted with the progress of the defense effort.

Here in Washington the Department of Agriculture and the Agricultural Division of the National Defense Advisory Commission are working hand in glove to speed agriculture's contribution in defense. I am happy to send you with this first memorandum in the new series of defense information bulletins from my office, a very thoughtful and clear statement by Mr. Chester C. Davis, Agricultural Commissioner of the NDAC. I recommend that it receive the very careful and thorough study of every officer of this Department. I recommend further that those officers who are asked by citizens for information about defense and agriculture give them the information contained in Mr. Davis's statement and in this memorandum.

Claude R. Wickard

Secretary.

NATIONAL DEFENSE

(By Chester C. Davis, Agricultural Commissioner, Advisory Commission to the Council of National Defense)

An understanding of the nature of the opposing forces striving for dominance in the world today is, in my opinion, the first essential of an effective defense program. Only through such an understanding can we develop a sense of the necessity for the things that are being done and will be done which vitally affect us all. Most of us realize that the aggressors in the Old World would not limit their hope of conquest to the present arena of destruction and bloodshed. We further sense that the present struggle is no quarrel over trade and colonies alone. Here is a war whose conclusion might be the imposition everywhere of moral, spiritual, and economic concepts which would destroy freedom as we know it.

Events of the past few years have made the threat to our freedom a reality too great to be ignored. We have witnessed the hopeless struggle against the forces of oppression by unprepared and neutral nations which failed to realize that their liberty was in peril. Reluctantly we have been forced to the conclusion that to preserve our country and our liberties we must be prepared to match force with superior force if the test should become necessary. Events have shown us that it is a new kind of defense that is required to keep a new kind of war away. The total war which the aggressors are waging involves the total energies and resources of all the peoples of the aggressor nations. A total defense for America likewise calls for the unified efforts of all our people and the will to mobilize all our resources.

The sooner America demonstrates her strength by speedy and complete economic mobilization, the less likely the prospect becomes that we shall be compelled to test it in war.

If we are to be secure, every citizen, our complete industrial organization, and our agricultural groups must be ready to make whatever contribution and sacrifices the future may compel. The mobilization of manpower, the accumulation of planes, tanks and guns, of reserves of foodstuffs and raw materials, are not sufficient in themselves. This country must rearm in spirit and determination. We must cultivate and maintain an indomitable will to defend and preserve our free institutions. Equally important, we must not for a moment lose sight of the fact that failure to prepare places our country in real danger.

The President has appointed the National Defense Advisory Commission to coordinate the program to make this country invulnerable in a military sense. That job is proceeding with real vigor and the progress that has been made in the past four months is encouraging. Basic-

ally, the Commission's job is to assist the military establishments in procuring planes, tanks, guns and uniforms for an army of 1,200,000 men and equipment sufficient for an additional 800,000 in building a two-ocean navy and in providing the United States a total minimum air force of 25,000 fighting planes.

The responsibility of the defense commission, however, goes beyond the gigantic task of participating in the procurement of some 14 billions of dollars of war material. The President, mindful of the lessons of the past, is determined that in the marshaling of America's resources for defense the interests of all groups of our society shall be given consideration. In addition to specialists in the fields of raw materials and production, the defense commission has coordinate representation on behalf of labor, agriculture, and the consumer. Another commissioner has been charged with the special responsibility of determining the impact of defense preparations and international developments upon our price structure and the economic system in general and in formulating programs to correct unfavorable tendencies.

The responsibilities assigned to the several divisions of the commission give evidence of the fact that this nation is trying to profit by past experiences and to so organize the defense program as to minimize the shock to our economic system when the emergency is over. My job, as I conceive it, is to determine in what way agriculture can cooperate to the fullest extent with the defense program and at the same time to aid in the development of policies which will maintain the agricultural plant in a healthy, productive condition.

Most of us remember, all too clearly, the eagerness with which farmers responded to the "Food Will Win The War" slogan in 1917. Agricultural leadership still thinks in terms of the economic headache and the soil erosion damage which followed that emergency period. This we wish to avoid in our effort to keep war away from this continent. Planning and organization might have prevented the hangover after 1918. We now have the opportunity to minimize disastrous effects of world conditions this time if we are sufficiently far-sighted.

I repeat what I have stated often during the past four months:

Agriculture's responsibility in this crisis is the same as that of all other American interests -- to make resources and manpower available for defense purposes. America's farmers are perhaps better prepared than any other group to meet that responsibility. Agriculture does not have to expand its production to meet whatever demands the future may bring. There is an abundance of food and fiber for civilian requirements and military needs. But because farmers have always produced abundantly, their economic future is complicated by loss of export markets. Additional measures may be necessary to prevent the loss of these markets from impairing agriculture's ability to continue to produce.

I have taken the position that no defense program can succeed if farm prices and farm income are not maintained at the level that will

keep the farm plant healthy. Adjustments in agriculture are already under way and developments beyond our control will almost surely result in additional far-reaching changes. The producers of many export crops, including cotton, tobacco, wheat, lard, fresh and dried fruits, and naval stores, have lost, at least temporarily, a large part of their export markets. The defense program itself through increased industrial activity will contribute to an increased domestic demand for many farm commodities, including some export products. For a time the Government can protect the producers of these crops against the effects of this loss by commodity loans, but if export outlets continue to be restricted, obviously many producers sooner or later will have to turn to something else.

Farmers must be alert for information that will lead to an understanding of the reasons for the defense effort and how world developments are likely to affect the market for their products. Every effort should be made to supply information as it becomes available, but each individual will need to interpret this information in terms of his own particular problems. If this is done, farmers will be prepared to make such shifts in their operations as are necessary in order to maintain a healthy farm plant. At the same time governmental agencies will need to be alert and prepared to assist in every way possible.

I can assure you that in the defense program itself all reasonable steps will be taken to minimize the agricultural distress that will result from the changed market conditions. We are striving, for example, for the maximum possible decentralization of new defense industries not only because it is sound practice for the country as a whole but because of its importance to agriculture. Decentralized industry brought close to rural areas means jobs for low income farmers and a diversified new market for farm products. But this factor cannot completely alleviate the conditions brought about by lost markets. New and additional steps may be indicated. Individual producers and farm leaders, in government and out, should be giving constant attention to the implications of the new economic environment in which agriculture may find itself. But, above all, we must never forget that in face of fast-moving developments throughout the world, our single purpose is to maintain democracy here at whatever cost or sacrifice.

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